

December 2013

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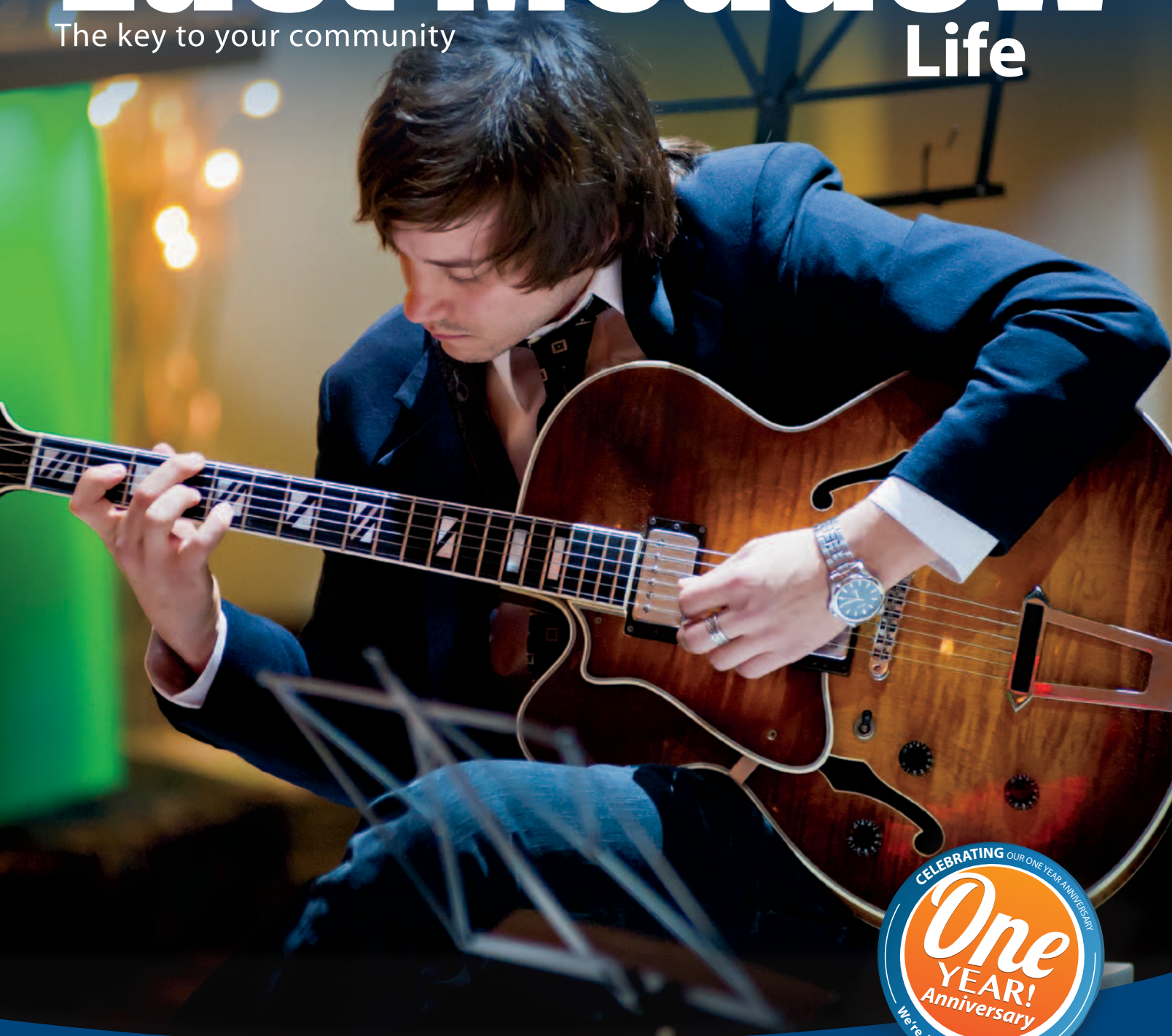
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Life



Making Music Matter

School Puts Students on Center Stage

Hitting High Notes: Making Music Matter

Center Stage Music Center celebrated its two-year anniversary earlier this year and hopes to make dreams come true.

by Alyssa Kennedy and Angela O'Reilly
Community contributors

Making its two-year anniversary in September, Center Stage Music Center, has quickly become one of Westbury's, and its neighboring communities', best kept secret. Nestled on Carman Avenue, the local music school has made tremendous strides towards reigniting the heart and soul of music education on Long Island.

The history of Center Stage began with one woman's dream to share her passion for music with others. Born in Ecuador and raised in Queens, New York, director and co-owner Veronica Sanchez realized early on that being in the presence of music was something she simply could not live without. Sanchez's love for music started to develop at the age of 13, when she would spend hours every day after school tinkering away at the upright piano located in her mother's workplace. It wasn't long before she was able to teach herself how to play some of her favorite songs by ear. Sanchez's parents enlisted their daughter into private lessons after hearing her natural talent. Shortly after, she dove further into the musical world and joined her

church's band, which helped to solidify her decision to pursue music as a career. Sanchez double majored in Music and Psychology at Queens College: Aaron Copland School of Music. Outside of the classroom, she taught piano and voice lessons, and performed as a singer-songwriter all around New York City. Between her collegiate studies, seven years of teaching prior to the birth of Center Stage, and continuing to perform, Sanchez had discovered she had only just laid the foundation for her intended career path.

With a clear goal in sight, she decided to combine her knowledge and experience and build a student-centered home for aspiring musicians. Her dream came true with the help and support of co-owners, and siblings, Yadira and Hector Sanchez, and Center Stage Music Center was born. The name "Center Stage" derives from the desire to create a setting in which students are the center of focus. This philosophy is one of many factors that set Center Stage apart from other music schools. Offering one-on-one instruction for a wide variety of instruments, Center Stage enthusiastically showcases its students in recitals that take place twice a year, as well as motivational newsletters that highlight the hard work of its students and teachers. Center Stage and its team of talented, university-trained instructors make it their mission to provide a positive experience catered to each individual on a daily basis.

Center Stage's slogan is "Learn – Play – Have Fun." It envisions a community of emerging musicians who are learning musical skills while playing with excellence, and having fun while students express themselves creatively. The sense of community also extends to the public, constantly striving to participate in various philanthropic events. Its involvements

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A student plays the drums during a practice session.
Photo courtesy of Center Stage Music Center



A student at Center Stage Music Center learns the guitar.
Photo courtesy of Center Stage Music Center



A student plays the cello during a practice session.
Photo courtesy of Center Stage Music Center



A student performs on the piano.
Photo courtesy of Center Stage Music Center

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include caroling at ACLD (Adults and Children with Learning and Developmental Disabilities) during the holiday season, performing at several shelters after Hurricane Sandy, and continuous donations to various groups in the community.

Through the years, Center Stage has formed a solid team of rock star instructors that use their prior training and accomplishments to help create a uniquely educational experience for their students. All of Center Stage's teachers are university trained and most are New York State certified educators, hold-

ing a bachelor's, masters and/or doctorate degree. Many have studied with professional musicians such as Jimmy Ponder, Sean Jones, members of the NYC Metropolitan Opera and members of the Philharmonic Orchestra. They have a vast range of instructional experience, including teaching in a public school setting, leading C.A.P.E (Creative Arts Program of East Meadow), being an adjunct professor at Molloy, and judging at the NYSSMA Festival. Aside from teaching, Center Stage's multi-instrumental instructors have also performed in numerous famous clubs throughout NYC, as well as across the country, and have played with musicians such as Yo-Yo Ma, Richard Stoltzman and Bobby Rondinelli of Black Sabbath. Some of the teachers are also successful songwriters who have done work for commercials and worked with multi-platinum and Grammy award winning writers.

The music instructors at Center Stage have dedicated themselves to inspiring and bettering their students as both musicians and artists. A student's parent states, "Aiden is not only playing the piano wonderfully, but he has learned about music theory while at Center Stage. His teachers have been an awesome inspiration and they have really connected with him."

"My daughter started lessons with (Center Stage) almost a year ago and, not only does she love it, but she's doing great," states another proud parent.

Teacher Kelby is proud of one of his students for "preferring to tackle longer, harder classical pieces which inevitably will pay off when it comes to playing ability and possessing an

Taking Center Stage.

2011

*The year that Veronica Sanchez
and her siblings opened
Center Stage Music Center.*



Veronica Sanchez is one of the founding members of Center Stage.
Photo courtesy of Center Stage Music Center

analytically musical mind.”

One of the first students at Center Stage, Alexandra and now performing artist, Skela, says, “Center Stage is like a second home. Center Stage has helped me find myself and embark on a musical career.”

Students say their favorite part of music lessons is to hear the final piece as they successfully play it after all of the hard work and dedicated practice time that they put in. The most rewarding part of teaching is seeing students succeed, and at Center Stage, the students continue to delight the staff. Many students received a perfect or near perfect score on NYSSMA, in turn becoming nominated for All County and LISFA.

The dream of creating an environment for emerging musicians to blossom into successful, well-rounded musicians has become a reality for Veronica Sanchez and her family with the birth of the Center. In two short years, Sanchez and her team of instructors have grown a small vision into a successful business where students can feel at home. Center Stage is a platform for people of all ages to express themselves creatively through the art of music and to take “center stage” in showcasing their limitless musical accomplishments.

Leading the Way

Center Stage Music Center has a number of highly qualified instructors giving lessons.

Veronica Sanchez

Studied at the Aaron Copland School of Music at Queens College. She specializes in piano, voice and song writing.

Angela O'Reilly

Studied at the Aaron Copland School of Music at Queens College. She specializes in piano and strings, and is the Little Stages director.

Eric Fisher

Studied at Duquesne University and the Mary Papperty School of Music. He specializes in guitar, bass and piano.

Maria Jacobs

Studied at Hofstra University, Duquesne University and at the Mary Papperty School of Music. She specializes in piano and voice.

Kelby Khan

Studied at Hofstra University, The Boston Conservatory and Bard College Conservatory of Music. He specializes in piano, percussion, voice, guitar and band.

To see more instructors, visit centerstagemusiccenter.com.



An instructor gives piano lessons to a student at Center Stage Music Center.

Photo courtesy of Center Stage Music Center

